

Remarks at a Dinner Hosted by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the  
United Nations in New York City  
*September 23, 2008*

Mr. Secretary-General, this is my eighth chance to welcome you to New York, and I'm honored to do so. You did mention, I'm heading into retirement—[laughter]—but it has been a joy to work with you, the staff, and many of the leaders here in this hall.

It is my honor to propose a toast, Mr. Secretary-General, to you and to your hard

work. May God bless all in the room, and, Mr. Secretary-General, may God continue to bless you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:45 p.m. at United Nations Headquarters. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-General Ban.

Remarks to Leaders of the Western Hemisphere in New York City  
*September 24, 2008*

Listen, thank you all very much for being here. I'm joined by leaders throughout our hemisphere to discuss trade and prosperity. I know they're going to want to hear about the rescue plan that we have submitted to the Congress. They can see our legislative process is full of give-and-take, that there's ample debate. But I am confident that when it's all said and done, there will be a robust plan, and there needs to be.

Each of the 11 countries here has a free trade agreement with the United States or one pending before Congress. Free and fair trade is in our mutual interests.

What's interesting about free and fair trade amongst the nations is that the people benefit. For example, the Central American-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement is in its early stages, but trade between participating countries with the United States is up 23 percent. That translates to jobs and prosperity. In the 5 years since the free trade agreement between the United States and Chile took effect, trade between our two nations has increased by more than 180 percent. And that's positive. In other words, these agreements are mutually beneficial. And most importantly,

they help small-business owners and workers and farmers and ranchers.

In the nearly 15 years since NAFTA entered into force, trade between the United States, Canada, and Mexico has increased by a combined total of more than 200 percent.

Today our countries are launching the Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas Initiative to continue this progress. This initiative will provide a forum where leaders can work to ensure that the benefits of trade are broadly shared. It will deepen the connections among regional markets. It will expand our cooperation on development issues. This is a very promising initiative, and I expect positive results when our representatives meet on these issues later this year.

It's important for the American people to understand that exports benefit workers. Half of our growth last year was the result of trade. And therefore, it's in our interest to continue to open up markets, particularly in our own neighborhood. There are three free trade agreements pending in the Congress today: South Korea, Panama, and Colombia. Obviously, two of those are with